

## Cutworms on Corn

Several species of cutworms occur in corn fields. As with wireworms, these will not be distinguished from one another, but will be referred to collectively as cutworms.

There is usually some cutworm damage in almost every field every year. A most frequent site of damage is bottom land. The most serious injury results from worms feeding at or just below the soil surface. The worm may feed around the stalk of the plant, girdling it and severing the roots from the rest of the plant. Frequently the worm may be found curled up around the stalk, or nearby in the soil. The worms may move from plant to plant on successive nights. The female moth may lay as many as 1,000 eggs on the ground or foliage in grassy or weedy fields. When these hatch, the larvae feed on roots or foliage of the grasses and weeds. Overwintering takes place in the larval stage, in the soil or under clumps of trash or grass. In the spring, worms attack whatever vegetation is available with voracious appetites. If the available vegetation is newly-planted corn, severe damage may be incurred. The key is not to plant corn on newly broken sod, or on land that was grassy or weedy the previous summer. In this way, cutworm damage can be greatly reduced.

Cutworms may be controlled chemically using a 7-inch band of a recommended insecticide at the base of small plants at the first sign of damage. Since the list of labeled products is constantly changing, and since available products varies from state to state, there will be no mention of specific products. With all insecticides, read and follow label instructions carefully.



**Cutworm damage to a corn seedling.**

Photo: Clemson University, CE 28.

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EIIIS/AG-4 (New 03/1999).